Future opportunities

Possibilities ■ Hope

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECtivity exist across Long Beach utilizing the RiverLink framework. These projects exist outside of the scope of this study, yet their successful completion will solidify connections between the city and the river, from neighborhoods to parks, and from parks to the rivers. They will also augment current planning and economic development.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

Chavez Park to Victory Park

From Chavez Park, visitors can travel east along Fourth Street to Maine, and south to Victory Park. This route connects to downtown through the World Trade Center plaza adjacent to the public library and Lincoln Park. Across from these areas of interest, on south side of the Ocean Boulevard, is Victory Park, which stretches eastward along the Shoreline Village development areas. Victory Park connects people to commercial opportunities and attractions like Pine Avenue, the Aquarium of the Pacific, the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, the Long Beach Museum of Art and the western San Pedro Bay beaches. Connections to the Queen Mary and its associated Events Park should be improved for pedestrian and bicycle travel along Queen's Way bridge and the Catalina Island Ferry slips. A potential "Maritime Park" can be added to the current Events Park, showcasing other historic ships and nautical attractions to celebrate Long Beach's naval and maritime history.

NORTH LONG BEACH

North Long Beach's neighborhood amenities, starting north of Del Amo Boulevard to the top of the town, will have a Deco Moderne style response in keeping with the city's redevelopment efforts to revitalize and restore the historic commercial core at Market Street and Long Beach Boulevard.

Market Street at Long Beach Boulevard

This planned historic district is under consideration by the Redevelopment Agency for a pedestrian-oriented commercial node (City of Long Beach, 2002b). Once developed, this area will be a significant district and point of interest along the Market Street pathway and will connect directly with the river greenway. Historic preservation of Deco Moderne commercial buildings and possible public parking enhancements are planned.

Atlantic Avenue

Safe pedestrian and bicycle travel must be enhanced along Atlantic Avenue to provide north and south movement between pathways.

Northwest Long Beach and Coolidge Park

Connections to this existing park in the Coolidge Triangle area occur along Long Beach Boulevard and Artesia Boulevard. This is the only parkland for the College Square, Coolidge Triangle, Freeway Circle, and Longwood Neighborhoods. These northwest communities are surrounded by growing industrial interests and desperately need linkages to local open spaces. The park may be in jeopardy because of its proximity and abutment to I-710, which is under study for expansion. There is an opportunity to make Long Beach Boulevard a pedestrian parkway north of the Market Street historic core. Open spaces under the I-710 and 91 Freeway underpasses should be explored for additional open space opportunities.

67th Street Site

Sixty-seventh Street is a potential site under consideration for additional parklands and open space, which sits north of Artesia Boulevard, below the 91 Freeway and west of Atlantic Avenue. Vehicular access is available from a service road just north of the westbound lane of Artesia Boulevard and from the neighborhood at East 67th Street. The design team could not gain access to the site, but suggests that there are opportunities to utilize the cool microclimates created by being under both Artesia Boulevard and the 91 Freeway overpasses. Participants at the community meetings said the site was used for youth camping at one time, and suggested bringing back a youth campsite, exploring possible equestrian uses, and creating a nature study area.

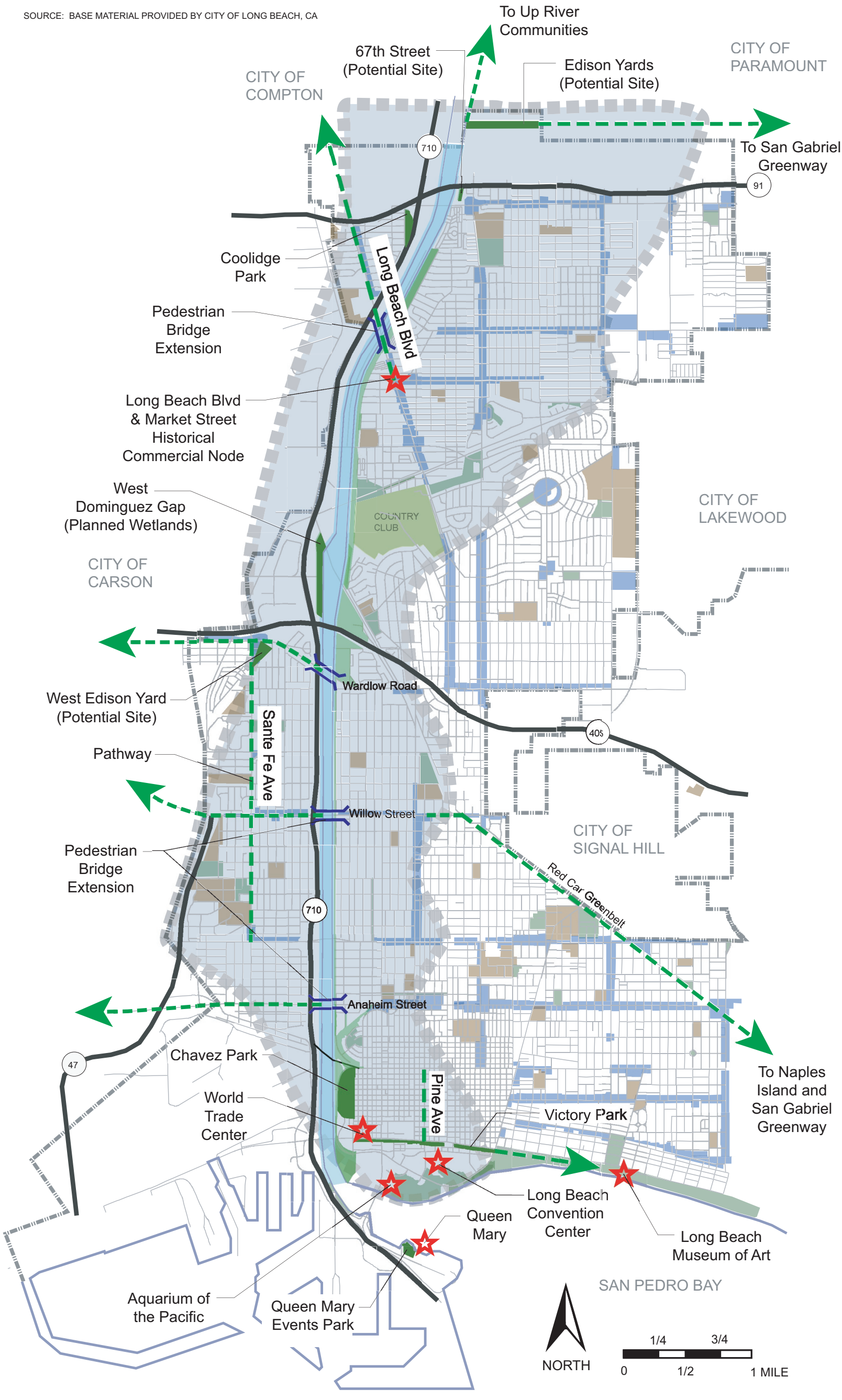
Edison Yards

Edison Yards are part of the Southern California Edison Power Company right-of-ways. They are a potential string of sites under consideration for additional parklands and open space. These sites sit north of the 91 Freeway, abut the Los Angeles River greenway, and are mostly barren other than some wild grasses, due to large high-tension power lines and supporting structures. The design team suggests the Edison Yards site become a greenway link to the San Gabriel River. This set of spaces does not stretch the entire distance to the San Gabriel River. It jumps over Atlantic Avenue and other streets, then continues in this fashion eastward, approximately ten city blocks until it reaches the city boundary

WESTSIDE OF LONG BEACH

FUTURE CONNECTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES

SOURCE: BASE MATERIAL PROVIDED BY CITY OF LONG BEACH, CA



on the east. Along the greenway or trail, near major access points, native plant nurseries can be developed to provide healthy plant stock for the urban forestry programs and to provide after school activities, such as gardening, urban forestry, and nursery management. These programs teach skills to children and teenagers in need of healthy and positive engagement. There is also an opportunity for community gardening plots in this site. Leasing arrangements could be made with Edison, similar to agricultural and storage companies currently using other right-of-ways all throughout the Los Angeles area. As previously mentioned, just north of the Edison Yards, at the city boundary, will be the "Top of the Town" gateway on LARIO Bikeway, to signify the northern extent of Long Beach's reach of the Los Angeles River greenway.

West Bank Neighborhoods

The West Bank Neighborhoods from Pacific Coast Highway to Wardlow Road should exhibit the cultural flavor of the ethnic murals that run throughout the neighborhoods, especially on Santa Fe Avenue. Local artists and residents should be encouraged to participate in the creation of such murals whenever possible. There should also be representations of the former Naval Station and associated structures found on this side of Long Beach, as well as industrial elements, and in particular, their signature water tower.

West Dominguez Gap

A wetlands park is proposed in the western portion of Dominguez Gap, much like the eastern portion. Pedestrian pathways and connections should link West Bank neighborhoods and parks to this proposed project, and to sites on the East Bank of the Los Angeles River by utilizing the existing river bridges.

West Edison yards

Another potential Edison right-of-way exists on the west bank of the river, south of Wardlow Street, and stretches to the intersection of Arlington Street and Santa Fe Avenue. Connections should be made from the surrounding neighborhoods and parks into this greenbelt; we suggest access from Santa Fe Avenue and Wardlow Road.

Santa Fe Ave

Santa Fe Avenue is a significant north/south roadway featuring murals on walls painted by children and community members. The median should be widened along this street and made into a parkway setting. Community gardens can be incorporated into vacant parcels along the street, reinforcing the strong sense of community along Santa Fe Avenue. The roadway also provides excellent bicycle connections through West Bank neighborhoods.

Pedestrian Connections

Most of the sidewalks on the Los Angeles River bridges have a maximum width of 3 - 4 ft. This narrow width, combined with the length of the bridges, the lack of shade, and the close proximity to fast moving traffic, discourages pedestrian traffic over the river.

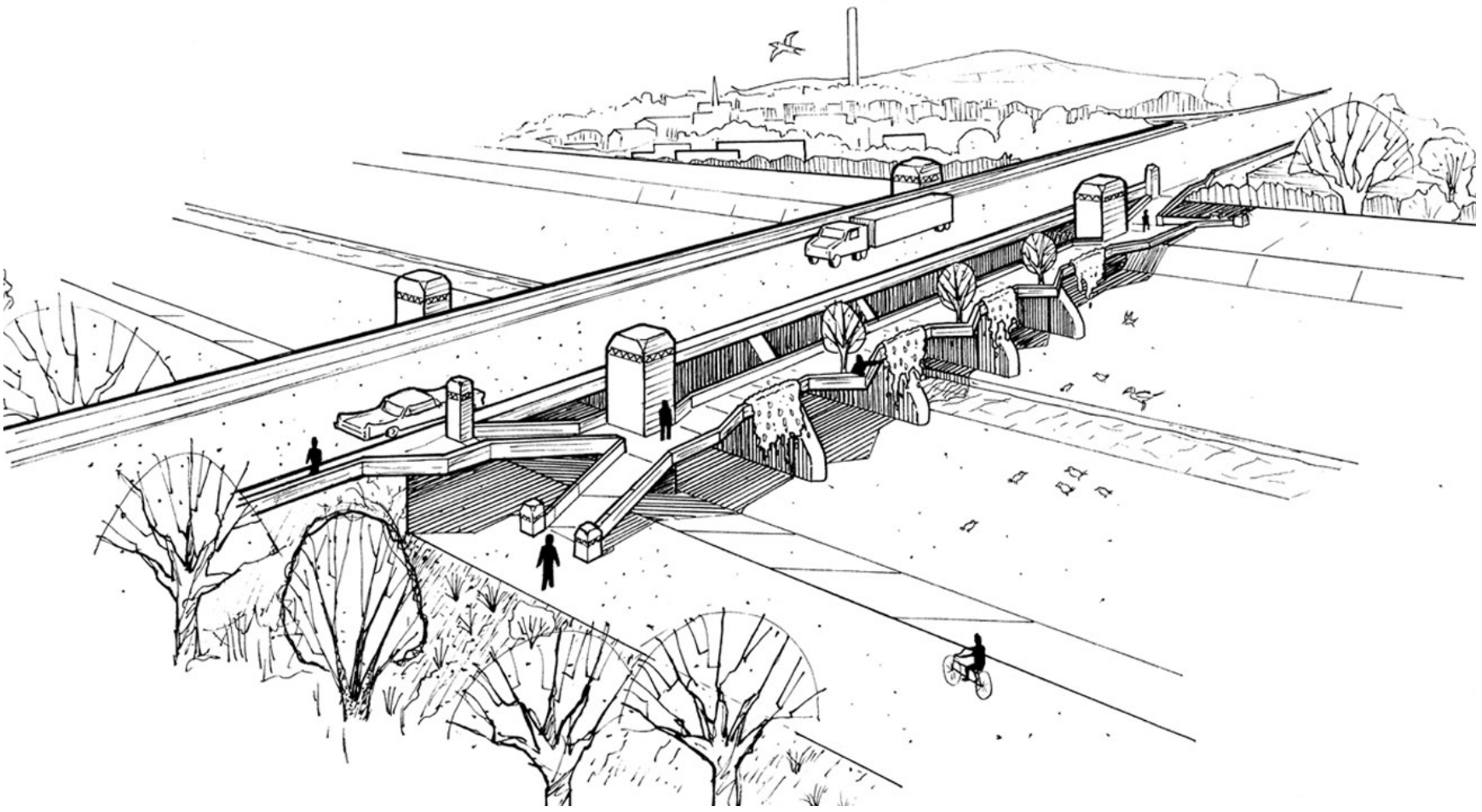
During our visits to Long Beach, little pedestrian use was observed on these bridges. The design team proposes the city add pedestrian bridge extensions to the existing Los Angeles River bridges at Anaheim Street, Willow Street, Wardlow Road and Long Beach Boulevard. The design team believes this will be less expensive than widening the current sidewalks or constructing new pedestrian bridges. The concept for such a pedestrian bridge extension is to offset the bridge by laying the walkway, on or attached to, the existing pier system of the bridges at least 8 ft below the current bridge roadbed or decking. This placement still allows pedestrians to be seen from the roadway, but moves them under the traffic noise and vehicular emissions for comfort, health, and safety. It also allows better wildlife viewing over the river. Ramp connections should provide access from the street above and the LARIO Bikeway below, if infrastructure permits. These extensions can be placed on one or both sides of the bridge. The design team suggests they be placed on the north side, if possible, to utilize the cooler microclimate and shading benefits of southern sun exposure. Planting niches for vines and small trees can be included to further enhance the pedestrian experience.

I-710 Expansion

This project will have the greatest consequences for neighborhoods on the west bank. Regardless of which expansion option is chosen, connections to the river will be strained if not completely severed. To minimize the effects on the adjacent neighborhoods, screening, done through berms, plantings, and sound walls, should be installed.

Ports of Long Beach

The expansion plans of the ports of Long Beach will place environmental stresses on neighborhoods north of Anaheim Street in the form of pollution, noise, and increased traffic congestion. The urban forest should be greatly enhanced between Anaheim Street



Pedestrian Bridge Extension to West Bank Neighborhoods

and Pacific Coast Highway to buffer some of these environmental hazards.

Central and Eastern Long Beach

Red Car Greenbelt

The development of the former Red Car right-of-way provides connections from Veterans Park in the west to Recreation Park in the east. Class I and Class II bike lanes should be developed to integrate this greenbelt into adjacent neighborhoods, building a connection southeastward all the way to Recreation Park, Colorado Lagoon, and the marine parks in the vicinity of Naples Island.

San Gabriel River

San Gabriel River Greenway

The modular, 'kit of parts' framework of the RiverLink system can be easily adapted to fit the conditions between the Eastside of Long Beach and the San Gabriel River. If this connection can be made, a precedent will be set to develop connections along the entire reach of both the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers, promoting open space connections across the Los Angeles basin.

Creative Redefinitions of Open Space

The RiverLink vision will help develop approximately 176 acres of continuous open space, and potential park lands along the Los Angeles River. However, considering all potential park and open space development across the city, Long Beach will still be short 120 acres to complete their ultimate goal of 1080 new acres of open space. In response to this shortfall, the design team suggests the following creative strategies. Even if not considered as parkland for passive or active use, the creative development of open space, planted with native Southern California plant species, will have these benefits for the city:

Reduction in energy use and cost - due to the shade and evaporative cooling benefits associated with native trees and plants.

Reduction of the urban heat island effect – due to native trees' and plants' ability to absorb and metabolize solar radiation.

Reduction in water use – due to less water use by native trees and plants compared with nonnative, water-loving invasive species.

Increase in the absorption of pollutants – due to native trees and plants acting as "sinks," absorbing and metabolizing carbon dioxide and other hazardous substances.

Increase in urban wildlife habitat – due to native trees and plants providing areas for breeding, cover, and forage.

Reduction in urban runoff – due to native trees and plants absorbing rainwater, versus runoff from hard impermeable pavements.

Increase in community aesthetics and general well being – due to many social and psychological benefits related open space creation. (Roseland, 1998)

Rethinking the Streets

The rethinking of streets as open space paths involves the reevaluation of street setbacks, medians and lane sizing, as well as the adaptation of the streetscapes to become landscaped pathways with amenities. There is an opportunity to entice the residents of Long Beach out of their cars, to walk along the streets, therefore reducing vehicular emissions and adding to the benefits of exercise and better social contact with their neighbors. The design team estimates that for every mile of streetscape with thirty feet of landscape treatment, be it median or sidewalk, over 3.5 acres of open space opportunities are created.

Alleys of Opportunity

The redesign of alleyways as open space ribbons of additional green pathway connections also contributes to the increase in open space in the Westside of Long Beach. Alleys can be retrofitted, within current maintenance regimes, to permeable surfaces that allow native vegetation to grow through the gaps in the paving. Alleyways converted in this manner present many opportunities to enhance the presence of open space and create connections to other parklands. The design team estimates that for every mile of alleyways retrofitted in this manner, over 1.7 acres of open space opportunities are created.

Ephemeral Open Spaces

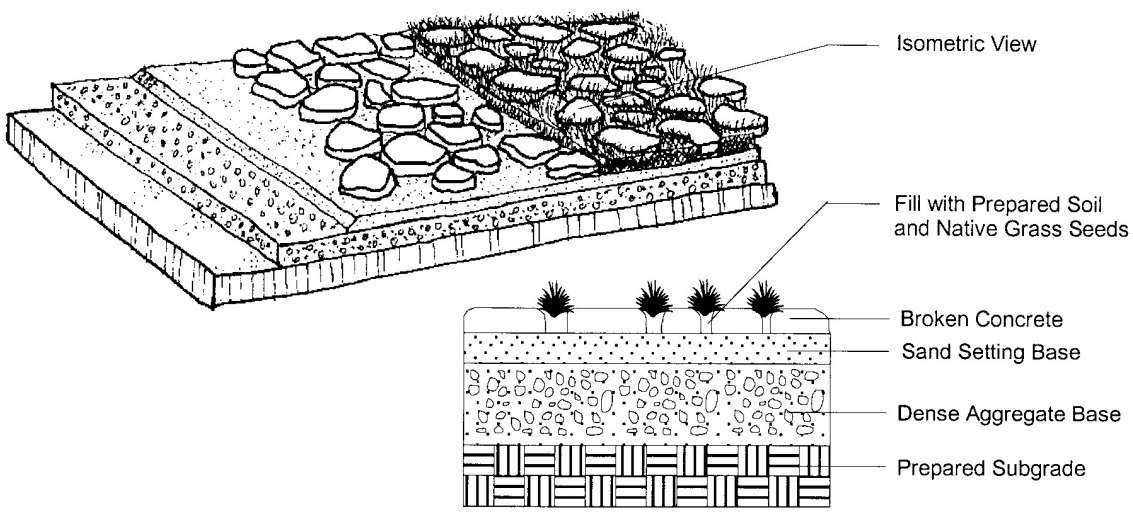
Idle or vacant land can be adapted as ephemeral open space patches. Although most of this available land may not be part of the public domain, there is an opportunity for it to serve the common good. When in private hands, the owner(s) of the property in question should be sought out and offered an arrangement to landscape the vacant parcel. Based on the site size, location, term of vacancy and proximity to surrounding urban features, an arrangement could be made with the landowner to landscape the vacant property within certain parameters based on the aforementioned circumstances. These parameters can determine whether or not to allow public access, whether to intensively landscape sites that are soon to be developed, and how to address pertinent city ordinances and zoning regulations. The design team suggests that the agreeable landowner be given property tax abatements or credits as long as the parcel is landscaped and maintained to Long Beach's satisfaction. The barter of or reduction of other city services and fees can be another reward for such forward-thinking property owners. Such landscape exchanges can also be enacted with other non-city public agencies and entities, as well as nonprofit organizations holding available land. The landowner maintains all rights to the property and the city benefits from additional open spaces, thus creating a win-win situation for all. The design team suggests that the plants considered be native or adapted to the Southern California coastal climate, reducing water and other resource inputs, and for the land to be clear of hazardous waste and contaminants before consideration for such an arrangement.

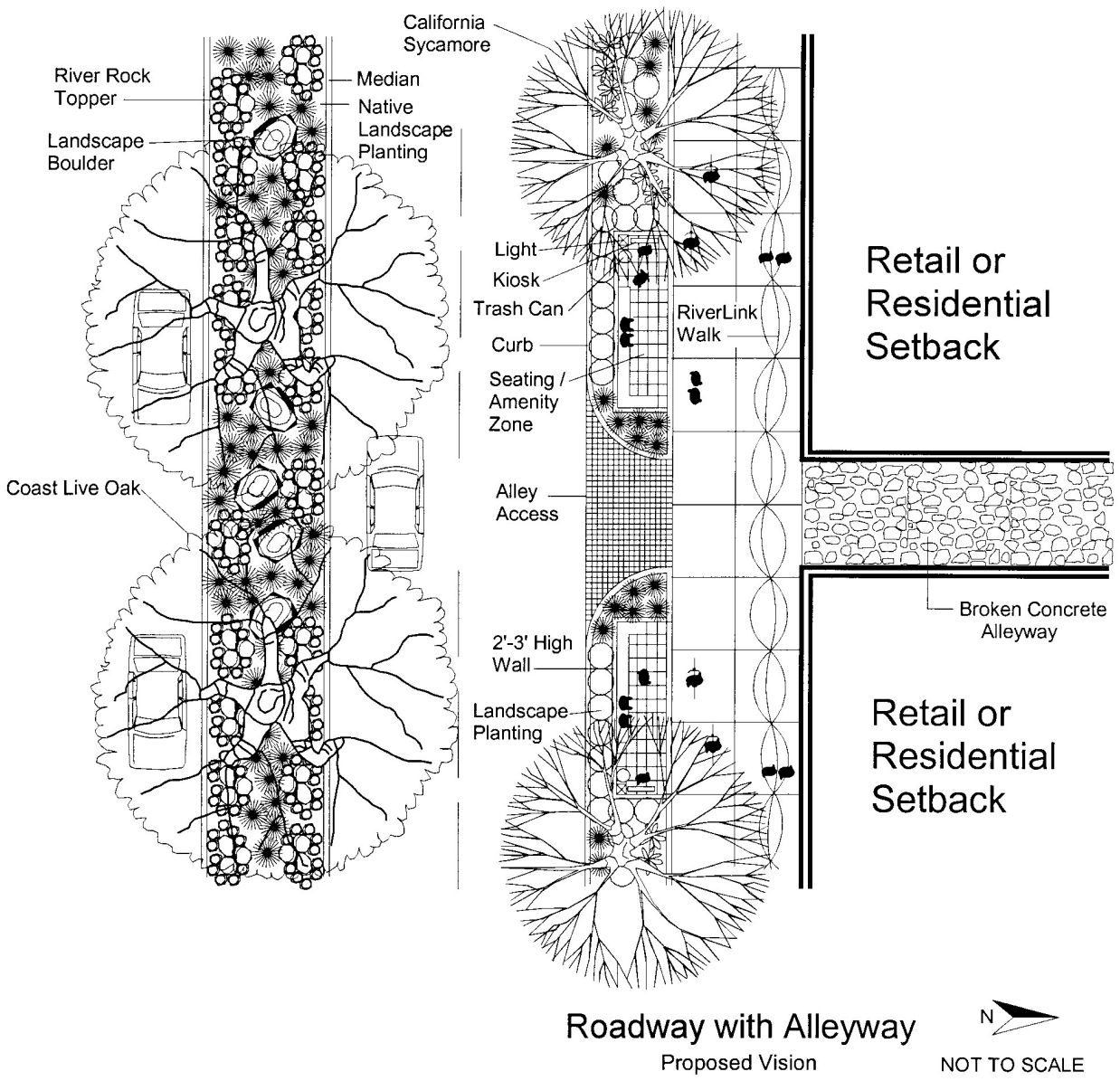
Green Roofs and Roof Top Gardens

The conversion of a municipal structure's roofing system to a green roof or roof top garden provides for still more opportunity for additional open space. There are structural concerns when retrofitting current structures with green roofs, and the design team suggests the city conduct a feasibility study of current existing municipal buildings and structures that are candidates for possible green roofing. Additionally, the design team suggests that all new city construction incorporate green roofs and/or roof top gardens. Gardens can complement the buildings' purpose, such as reading gardens on top of libraries, healing gardens on hospitals, and educational and interpretive gardens on schools and cultural centers. Existing private structures, as well as future buildings, can be awarded economic incentives similar to the ephemeral open space incentives, or building permit and fee reductions to retrofit or incorporate green roofing from the start.

Freeway Interchanges and Underpasses

As was mentioned earlier for the North Long Beach Area, the city should investigate areas of open space in or around freeway interchanges and underpasses. Cooperative agreements can be made with Caltrans to landscape areas with native plants and even provide for active recreation not requiring large fields. Access and public safety are key issues when contemplating these spaces, but even if they are fenced off, they can improve quality of life, reduce resource use, and provide aesthetic benefits. ■





Alleyway with Permeable Surface Retrofit